No. 655 Twopence May, 1958

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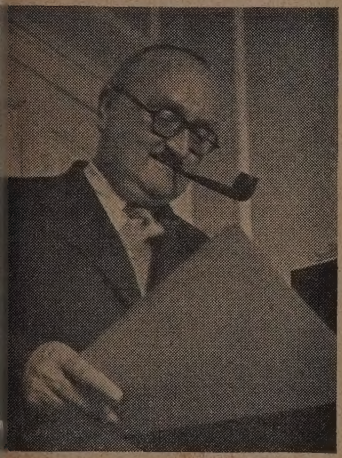
THE UNITARIAN

A MAGAZINE FOR FREE CHRISTIANS



THESE ARE UNITARIANS

5. John Rowland

By H. L. Short

John Rowland, active and popular minister of the Unitarian congregation at Brighton since 1952, also lives a very busy life as a writer in more than one department of literature. Formerly he was well-known as a writer of "thrillers." His first crime-novel, *Bloodshed in Bayswater*, appeared in 1939. Torquemada, the famous reviewer of "The Observer," called it "that little classic." Nearly a score of others followed, the series ending in 1950 with *Time For Killing*. In 1952 he wrote *Criminal Files*, about crime in real life. A sequel, *More Criminal Files*, will probably be published this summer.

This might seem enough work for one man, but Mr. Rowland also has written a number of interesting biographies of scientists. The first was a life of Sir Ernest Rutherford, the atomic pioneer, which was published not only in New York but also, in a Japanese translation, in Tokyo. Then followed a life of George Stephenson, the great railway engineer, and two biographies for teenagers, *The Penicilin Man* (Sir Alexander Fleming) and *The Mosquito Man* (Sir Ronald Ross), the second of which is to appear this autumn. At present he is working on the official biography of Lord Cadman, the head of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, in collaboration with the present Lord Cadman, his son.

In addition he has written a number of books explaining science to the layman. *Understanding The Atom* was published in 1938, and others include *This Age of Science* (1952) and *Atoms Work Like This* (1955). More recently, in *Mysteries of Science*, which was published both in London and in New York, he tackled the limitations of scientific knowledge, from flying saucers to the realm of art and religion.

Mr. Rowland is a West Countryman, born at Bodmin, in Cornwall, in 1907. As a boy he was a rather rebellious Methodist, who eagerly took to science as the answer to life's problems. Religion was fantasy, he thought; science, especially as expounded by H. G. Wells, was truth. In his fascinating autobiography, *One Man's Mind*, published in 1952, Mr. Rowland has told the story of his mental development. He became a student at Bristol University, spec-

ialising in physics and chemistry, and received his B.Sc. degree in 1929, followed by a diploma in education. For a time he was a schoolmaster in Ireland, before taking up with great enthusiasm a post on the staff of the Rationalist Press Association, in London.

He was a rationalist, but, it soon appeared, of a rather unusual type. He attacked the theology of the churches, but in the cause of a universal mystery greater than they could compass, towards which he felt reverence. Older rationalists protested against this, but more and more they seemed to him to be merely intellectual and destructive. Rationalism, he thought, ought to provide a faith which appealed to the emotions as well as to the mind.

The Second World War, in which he served for five years as a scientific technician in the Ministry of Supply, caused a crisis in his thought. He began to feel that some synthesis between science and religion ought to be possible, somewhere between rationalism and the religion of the churches. He ceased to be on the staff of the R.P.A., though still writing for them occasionally. He became a free-lance writer.

It was in Leeds, where he moved with his wife and son in 1950, that he came into touch with Unitarianism. He joined Mill Hill Chapel, under the ministry of Dr. R. W. Wilde, and found himself increasingly at home. In an interesting final chapter of his autobiography, Mr. Rowland shows how his development towards Liberal Christianity was both gradual and decisive, an acceptance of a new attitude rather than of a new set of beliefs. More and more, he felt, religious ideas made sense and "worked."

In 1952 he took charge of the Brighton and Ditchling congregations as a lay pastor, travelling each week to Manchester College, Oxford, for theological training, and in 1955 he received full ministerial status. In our churches he is in demand as a speaker on science and religion. The title of a pamphlet of his published by the Lindsey Press, *A Rational Faith*, truly indicates what has been his quest through life.

CHANGED PEOPLE

By A. B. Downing

Our Fraternal was discussing the religious revival in America. The Anglican Rector, who had just been there, said that American religious leaders are concerned about "the constant parade of trivialities in most church programmes" and a tendency to mistake "promotional activity for religious achievement." An American does not have to be a "changed person" to belong to a church.

What was meant by "a changed person?" The Congregational minister felt that the best Christians are probably the least church-conscious. But to belong to a religious fellowship is not equivalent to membership of an ordinary social club however high-minded or worthwhile. There must be something different about it. It must influence the lives of those who attend it. If spiritual things are shared in divine worship, then the process must have some effect upon us, otherwise it becomes an empty formality. Our Methodist colleague thought it was better to have many people going to church than to have churches empty and ignored. The reply was that it all depends on what churches teach and emphasise.

We agreed that the influence of church attendance upon the lives of members will always remain a question. A large and active community church might have less effect upon people's characters than membership in a small spirit-filled fellowship willing to commit its ways

to God in faith and without fear.

Afterwards, reading our own prayer-book, I was struck by the phrases which remind us that our religious faith must have some effect on our lives. For instance: "We bring our work to be sanctified, our wounds to be healed, our sins to be forgiven, our hopes to be renewed, and *our better selves to be quickened.*" Or "May the spirit of devotion which filled (Jesus's) soul *be manifest in us,* that we may be conformed to the image of his obedience, his patience and his faith." Such words assure us that religion is not just a matter of Sunday observance, but something that opens our hearts *at all times* to the Divine Spirit.

We've got wood-worm in the pulpit now!"
Oh? But I'm sure his wife wouldn't like that nick-name."

SEEK THE SUN with Unitarian Innocents Abroad! Few vacancies French Riviera, June 16-27; Norway, July 12-24; Denmark-Sweden August 12-22; Switzerland, August 18-29; reduced fares; lone travellers welcomed; nothing strenuous. Good fellowship, excellent hotels, personally conducted. Write immediately: Rev. G. Parkinson, 4, Balmoral Road, Doncaster.

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CHILDREN'S CORNER

To The Fair

The horse plodded slowly down the road in the warmth of a Spring afternoon. Simon the tinker sat on the cart, held the reins loosely and dozed off from time to time. They were passing a stile when Simon woke up quickly, aware that his name had been called. His jolly face broke into a huge grin when he saw the two Woodfolk sitting there. He stopped the horse and pushed his hat back on his glistening forehead. He mopped his brow with a great red handkerchief and his face wore a puzzled look.

"What are you doing here?" he asked. "Why aren't you at the May Fair?"

"Because we can't go," replied Nippa.

"You were there last year," said Simon. "What's different this year?"

"What is different is that we're all supposed to have 'flu," muttered Pippa.

"You *do* surprise me," laughed Simon. "You both look perfectly fit."

"We *feel* perfectly fit," said Nippa, gloomily, "but all of us have had the 'flu and the committee decided we should keep away from crowds for a bit. But we've kept away for days; we don't think there's any danger now."

"We shall just have to wait for the Summer Fair," Pippa added.

"Oh," said Simon, screwing up his face. "I think a change of air will do no harm and the Fair might make you forget your troubles."

"Do you think we ought to risk it?" asked Nippa anxiously.

"Of course—there's no risk. Come along for an hour or two. I'll bring you back before dark."

So they climbed up; and the cart rattled down the road, followed the bend round the small wood and soon was lost to view.

THROUGH THE GLOOM

A Holiday Parable

In the Yorkshire dales there is a place where a mountain "beck" or stream plunges down a steep waterfall with overhanging cliffs which soon close in, leaving the water to find its way through a very narrow cave for a hundred yards or so till it emerges from another crag lower down into the light of day again.

As a boy I knew this cave, and had been through it with a lighted candle many times. As we threaded our way along the water-course, flashes of daylight made their way in through crevices far up side passages or cracks, and so one day, when I found myself with a friend not far from the cave, but without matches or torch, I said "Let's try to get through in the dark." And in we went.

It was all right so long as we could see the entrance behind us, but it seemed frightfully dark ahead. Then we turned a corner into pitch blackness, only to find that in a moment a quite helpful ray of light shone from a crevice. On we groped, turning another corner into more pitch darkness in a spot where the roof came pretty low and the water seemed deeper. "Look," I said, "I believe there's more light to see by." Still groping, we found it came not from another lateral crack but from the beginning of the widening upper mouth of the cave. Very soon we were clambering up the waterfall in a twilight that was presently sunlight.

Nearly forty years later, on a holiday with my two young sons, I crossed the same hillside. We had neither torch nor matches. "There's a cave near here," I said, "let's see whether we can get through it." I told the boys I had once been through without a light. "I don't know whether I shall be able to find the way again," I said, "but as I've done it once, I know it can be done." It was slow work. Not only had I to find the way myself, but to help the boys along in a place they had never seen before. Just at the darkest spot I began to think I couldn't do it. It was not just as I remembered it. I was afraid of following the wrong passage. It was a dry summer and the water was very shallow. "We have to keep to the water," I said; and just then I began to see the faint twilight ahead — long before I had expected to see it—and we were soon through.

Life is very like that cave. It gets very dark in places, and we are afraid to go on. We might get lost. But we remember that light will break in, that light is behind us, and more light before us, and those who have faith in the light will come through.

It's true that one of us came through with a grazed skin, but life's like that too. "It was worth it," said the injured lad.

OUR FREE RELIGIOUS PRESS

Two of our Contemporaries

The Unitarian congratulates "*The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian*" on its new and enlarged format. This monthly journal which now for over fifty years has been the mouthpiece of liberal Christianity in Northern Ireland, is making a strong drive for wider circulation, and, thanks to the support of a number of advertising firms, has increased the number of its pages and improved the appearance of its outer cover.

The Unitarian also welcomes a newly fledged ally in "*The Canadian Unitarian*," a well-printed four-page quarto leaflet appearing quarterly, giving a surprising amount of information and news of our Canadian churches, though the editors lament that the news reports alone could fill more than the whole sheet if it were double the size.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

For over ten years the title of this feature has been "Recommended," but this month the Lindsey Press gets a "highly recommended" for the last three "Personal Testimonies"—Nos. 13—15, 2d. each.

What Unitarianism means to me. In No. 13 a Doctor tells how his broad Unitarian faith in a wise God helps him to give advice to all sorts of worried or cocksure patients. Many of them he has turned back into regular church attenders, and it doesn't worry him that their church may not be his—may not be Unitarian. But it is the religion of Jesus; trust in God, belief in forgiveness, faith in God's healing power, and not a religion *about* Jesus, that makes his work effective.

In No. 14 a Solicitor gives a surprisingly similar testimony. He tells how in poor man's lawyer work he soon discovered that people need for more than legal information—they need someone with whom they can share their burdens. Now anyone who has to share these burdens, says the Solicitor, needs a vital religion, and for him it is the Christianity of the Gospels, the Fatherhood of God, the Lord's Prayer, a religion whose lamp is kept shining in Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

In No. 15 a Seaman on a merchant ship tells how a simple Christian faith gives meaning to his life. God is a wise Father, ruling the world with dependable laws of nature, yet all life is miraculous with natural beauty, human love, and devoted self-sacrifice. The Bible is a book of sailing directions, but one written long before the coming of the steamship, so it must be interpreted in the light of modern experience. Jesus is a supreme example of God in the spirit of man, and God may be revealed in many great human lives.

Ask for these leaflets at your church bookstall, and get two copies of each; one to keep, and one to pass on to your doctor, your solicitor, and your friend at sea.

FAITH AND FREEDOM

The Spring issue carries a very varied selecion of correspondence on the issues of the "Call to Freedom," Hydrogen bomb tests, Religious Humanism, etc., with contrasting opinions. R. W. Sorensen writes on "Masculine Religion," a discussion of why there is so much stress on the "male" attributes of God, etc., in many religions, and how the "feminine emancipation'" may come. John Wallace Laws has a long and thorough article on "Sex and Religion."

NEW FILM STRIPS

The Blind Man, and *The Picnic Boy* are two strips in colour beautifully produced to accompany two of the Blandford Press *Very First Bible Stories*. They are issued by Educational Productions, Ltd. Wakefield. At the Primary Department level, and with a rather strong emphasis on the miraculous element in stories about Jesus, they could be used with older children, and provide scope for intelligent questions, e.g., Would a boy, blind from birth, if suddenly given his sight, *run* home to his mother, or would he be quite bewildered, and have to learn his way about in a world of sight?

UNITARIANS IN THE NEWS

The Rev. J. R. Blackburn had a second accident in February on his auto-scooter with fractures to collar-bone, wrist and ankle, and facial injuries.

Mr. Harry Crowther, of Leeds, has had his 95th birthday.

This issue went to press too early for any General Assembly reports to appear.

NEWS AND VIEWS

AUSTRALIA. SYDNEY Church has started a lending library.

DONCASTER held a Robert Burns service in January, when the President and other members of the Doncaster Caledonian Society attended, and three films of Scottish life were shown afterwards. There was a record attendance for an open meeting of the Men's Fellowship, when the Rev. Keith Treacher and Norman Williamson gave an account of the U.Y.P.L. exploration of Arnoy last year.

DUDLEY congregation, which has not for some time been holding two services every Sunday, but finds that while few members want to worship twice on a Sunday, many find it difficult to plan their family arrangements so as to worship always in the morning or always in the evening, is trying the experiment of holding two services each Sunday, with the same order of service, sermon and lessons (except when a visiting preacher comes). For this plan to succeed it is felt that every member must make a strong effort to come once a Sunday.

DUKINFIELD. An Easter effort for the Essex Hall fund was held on April 2nd, with an afternoon tea and a coffee evening, the tea and coffee being given by Messrs. J. Lyons and Co., Ltd. Friends were asked to bring an Easter gift for the Building Fund.

KIDDERMINSTER congregation is to receive legacies of £545 from the late Misses Jane and Carrie Badland.

LEEDS. Mill Hill Chapel has bought a new record-player with amplifier, and a record of the Broadcast service has been made.

LIVERPOOL. GATEACRE Chapel was nearly filled for morning service on Mothering Sunday, with many complete families represented, and over 80 bunches of flowers were distributed to children to take to their mothers. The Rose Queen presented flowers to mothers whose children were not present, and sent them to mothers who could not attend. This service is symbolic of the growing cause at Gateacre, where the membership has trebled in a few years.

LONDON. YOUTH SUNDAY evening service was very well attended when the congregation welcomed the University of London Unitarian Society, whose members conducted the service with dignity and reverence, the preacher being Miss Sylvia Johnson. A social half-hour followed. Another Advance Campaign is to be launched in April.

MANCHESTER. The DISTRICT ASSOCIATION held its Annual Meeting on March 25th at GORTON, since the usual venue, Cross Street Chapel, is in process of re-building. The numbers attending, perhaps in consequence of going outside th city centre, were rather less than usual, but the quality of the opening service and the meeting itself, and the Gorton hospitality, was excellent. Mr. George Lowthian gave a most impressive address on "Religion and the Welfare State," which produced a keen discussion. ALTRINCHAM held a successful Mothering Sunday service and on March 29th the Senior and Junior U.Y.P.L. groups combined to present "Playtime," an evening's entertainment, with sketches, mimes and one-act plays, which brought out some new talent, and introduced the Y.P.L. skiffle group. At PENDLETON the evening service on Palm Sunday was held in the schoolroom so as to include a moving presentation of the play "The Sixth Hour," on the theme of Judas Iscariot after the Betrayal.

MEN'S LEAGUE. The Annual Meeting was held at Cross Street, Manchester, and Mr. W. Binns Hargreaves of Manchester, gave some "Second Thoughts on the Welfare State," which provoked a discussion

lasting more than an hour. Mr. Hargreave reviewed the welfare legislation since 1908 when Mr. Lloyd George brought in the first Old Age Pensions Bill. In discussion there was general support for the Welfare State, but doubts were expressed at the tendency of a minority to sit back and leave the State to carry their responsibilities. Dr. Wilde stressed that the church could help by emphasising personal responsibility and by its example.

MOSSLEY reports renewed activity, with increases in church attendance. The Women's League has trebled its numbers. A Youth Club has been started, and members took part in the evening service on Youth Sunday, when the preacher was Miss Barbara Johnson, of Swinton.

NORTH CHESHIRE SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION. Forty-seven people attended the conference on "Our Schools Have a Job To Do," held on March 8th, at the Unitarian College. Three groups discussed Session I, "To Make Unitarians," and Session 2, "To Make Good Citizens." Group reports were presented to the whole conference, after which a panel of observers gave their impressions of the discussion. A delightful tea was provided by Mrs. Kenworthy, and a concluding Epilogue was conducted by Mr. Barber, of Denton.

STAND. A local branch of the Save the Children Fund is being formed, and the minister is organising a scheme of help from volunteers ready to come to the rescue of families with domestic emergencies caused by illness or accident. The Sunday School held a fancy dress party in February.

STOCKPORT. At the annual Sunday School party the May Queen distributed prizes to the boys and girls, included in which were a number of "Jubilee Bibles" issued by the British and Foreign Bible Society.

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The Unitarian Faith in Unitarian Hymns
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The Story and Significance of the Unitarian Movement
by W. G. Tarrant, B.A.
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The Lindsey Press, 15, Gordon Square, London, W.C.1.

Central Postal Mission
ANNUAL MEETING
14, Gordon Square, W.C.1., at 7 p.m., Thursday, May 29th, 1958.
Mrs. A. D. Mitchell, B.A.,
(Chairman of Publicity Dept.)
on "LOOKING AHEAD."
Refreshments, 6.30 p.m.

TORQUAY. The annual report shows that a record number of visitors (over 200) attended service during last holiday season.

DO YOU BELONG?

Attendance at service week by week is the mark of a good church member, unless, of course, ill or away. We come to worship together at church, and you are missed if you are not there; so do not be deterred by every little difficulty. Don't be stopped by visitors turning up suddenly. Invite them to come with you, or ask them to wait till your return, for you have an appointment to keep as important as any. Don't let a mountain of work prevent you. Keep church time clear, and arrange your work round it, for that is the time when you bear in mind that God in your life is real, and your life is to be lived at depth in God. Without that, where are you? On the surface of living, that's all. Half-alive, no more.

The service loses something that your presence would give it. Particularly if we wish to attract new members we need to be present at the services ourselves. There can be no better way of life than the remembrance of God in worship. The regularity is half its value. It is a good custom to take our steps to the church at the appointed hour, and come with our children as soon as they are old enough, in order that every Monday may be a new beginning to the working week, and every Sunday the reminder of eternal life.

American Church Calendar

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